1: Thurston & Rangachari AW50 Badaga AW50

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[For information on oaths, see Category 782.]

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
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177 the upper extreme for the nation in population growth, volume of
178 immigration, natural wealth, and—most important—rural literacy, education, and knowledge of the outside world.

NOTES

121 1. I have not adopted the popular but chauvinistic approach of seeking out the Aryan, Dravidian or autochthonous elements in Badaga culture—in my view, a sterile and simplistic exercise.

681 2. An ostracized person would not live in the jungle, but would look for a distant
626 hamlet where he might be accepted; see below, p. 171, 198.

[p. 10 is blank]

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attendance coinciding with the conversion and the take-over of some government schools by the Basel Mission. Crops partially destroyed through drought; blamed by Badagas on a curse from the Christian preachers, and by the missionaries on Badaga idolatry.

1859 Continuing drought. By now, ten mission schools opened.

1863 Legislation to stop private parties clearing land to farm in reserved forests. Famine and some migration of Badagas away from their native villages; this was blamed on the missionaries, who were preaching that Christ was responsible for all that happens. The continuing conversions usually attributed by Badagas to sorcery; very low school attendance. Further government order prohibiting the annual fire-walking ceremony.

1864 A Badaga 'oracle' when questioned by villagers indicated the 'English god' was dangerous and evil-intentioned. Consecration of protestant chapel at Ne:rikambe.

1864-1884 Land Settlement; registration of all land holdings and the real end to swidden farming.

1865 Some headmen pulled down their temples and built new but bigger ones, for the first time in brick. Famine on the Nilgiris; drought blamed by Badagas on their gods losing power. A promise reportedly made by the god Irabattaraya to come to the plateau to cure the sick and destroy the missionaries; many disappointed that he did not come.

1873 A Badaga near Wellington became a deathbed convert to the Roman Catholic faith.

1875 Massacre of eighteen Kurumbas by Badagas armed with axes; this in retaliation for a fever among the Badagas.

1876 Monsoons failed; cholera epidemic among Badagas.

1877 Smallpox and cholera epidemics and dysentery on the Nilgiris and famine throughout South India; grain prices double the usual; heavy immigration of starving unemployed people from plains near the Nilgiris; among Badagas much loss of faith in the efficacy of Hindu rituals, and some conversions.

1880 By now 183 Badagas converted to Lutheranism since 1858, and the process continuing slowly; ostracism and physical fighting still associated with each conversion.

1882 Madras Forest Act: defined forest boundaries and further restricted the cutting of timber. Family of a Kurumba

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Virtuous People, the village of Eḍapalḷi became strongly Gandhian in the 1930s and today retains this idealism, has a well-balanced mixed farming economy and an optimistic outlook on the future—a combination of factors that is quite rare in Badaga villages. It was also the first village to send a Badaga to the United States for post-graduate training. Eḍapalḷi seems to have been a progressive community for some generations.

The Destruction of the Temples

Building and destroying temples were equated in Badaga thinking with establishing or destroying a religion. In one village, as we have seen, Badagas sympathetic to some aspects of Christianity built a temple to Jesus in which they placed the New Testament they had been given. In another village Metz knew some Badagas who were willing to pray with him but not openly to call themselves Christians. They even asked him to pull down their Hindu temple. Metz suggested it would be better if they showed their faith by doing this themselves. They refused but did remove the *pu:ja* offerings at the temple and kneel in front of it while the missionary prayed with them (Metz, 1864, 135–136).

In 1864 a Protestant chapel was consecrated in the Badaga village of Ne:rikambe, and in 1865 famine hit the Nilgiris. Some of the Badaga leaders felt this happened because their gods were not properly honoured, and during the next few months many villages went through the unprecedented steps of tearing down their temples and building new, bigger ones in their place. By this means the people hoped to regain the favour of the gods and counter the influence of the mission. It is noteworthy that brick, a European novelty which up until this time had rarely been used in Badaga building, was the material of these new temples; stone is the usual material even today. In one large village several temples were destroyed by the headman and four new ones built, two of them for gods not previously worshipped there.[12] The process of rebuilding temples continued for several decades and affected 'almost all the villages' (B.E.M.S., 1870, no. 31, 22–23; 1905, no. 66, 66).

Sanctions against Conversion

Social pressures were constantly being exerted on converts, their

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626 797 close relatives and any other Badagas who were receptive to the missionary message. Many cases could be cited from mission publications of Badagas who wavered in their attitude towards conversion. Metz for example commented that

> . . . the people of a village can be really affected by the love of Christ, when it is preached to them . . . But when I come again on my next tour . . . I find that in the meantime they have been so frightened by Satan and his tools that they hide in their houses when they hear that I have come, or run away when I ask them to listen if only for ½ hour. They fear to be convinced by my sermon and to have to suffer for it from their relations (B.E.M.S., 1870, no. 31, 22–23).

In some instances men waited till they were dying before openly requesting baptism (B.E.M.S., 1878, no. 39, 63). Individuals were always extremely reticent to become the first converts of their village. They often promised they would become Christians if their friends or relatives would lead the way. Thus Metz (1864, 135) remarked:

> . . . there are Badagas who will readily kneel down with me and offer up a prayer in which their wants were often expressed more forcibly, than they probably would have been by many a nominal Christian, and who, for several years, have discontinued idol worship: but when I ask them to go one step further . . . they immediately refer me to another, and say that if he will set the example, they will follow it; and if I appeal to him, he puts it off with a similar excuse.

Their immediate family problem was expressed by several to the preacher: 'What you say is true; but were we to follow your advice, we should have no hope of getting wives for our sons.' (B.E.M.S., 1853, no. 13, 39; 1856, no. 16, 34; 1858, no. 18, 92). [582] Intermarriage between Hindus and Christians was unthinkable. Fear of ostracism was great, and held men back from the Christian fold.

159 626 578 797 The biographies of some converts vividly convey the extent to which the Hindus tried to force converts back into their old ways. The following slightly abbreviated quotations offer a representative pair of case histories.[13]

(1) [Mada, baptized Mark] . . . had a wife and a little

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child ... The wife had promised to join him [in Christianity]. But on his return from Church the first Sunday, he found the door of his house locked, and his wife did not dare open it for him. Next day his father-in-law came, and took her and her child away to Adhikarhatti. His whole house was pillaged, and property to the value of several hundred rupees was taken away; even his potato field was dug up by his father-in-law. Shortly afterwards Mada's wife returned and was about to fulfil the promise she had made her husband before his conversion that she would also become a Christian. But next day her brother took her away by force, and after a few days she was sold [i.e., married after payment of bridewealth] to another husband. Only the little babe was left to Mada.

The bereaved husband then tried to get back his wife and his property by the help of the law ... But the [Moslem Police] Inspector treated the Christian witnesses with marked rudeness and would not listen to their evidence. Their depositions were sometimes taken down contrary to what was affirmed, in spite of [the missionary] Mr. Lütze's protests, while the witnesses of the opposite party were fully heard and recorded. Mada's wife was constantly surrounded by heathen Badagas, and when her husband asked her whether she had left him of her own free will or by compulsion ... she could only reply as she was told by the Badagas ... At last the police declared that the defendant [her father] had committed no unlawful action, and the case was dismissed ... Heathen neighbours and relations promised [Mada] their assistance to get back his wife and property, on condition that he returned to caste; Kalla especially pledged himself to that end. Mark [Mada] hesitated and wavered ... He stayed away from divine service, and when Kalla carried off Mark's wife by force from the neighbouring village and brought her back to him, when most of the plundered property also came back, he gave way ... (B.E.M.S., 1893, no. 54, 87-88; Harvest Field, 1894, ser. 3, vol. V, 546-551; Lütze, 1894, 22-23).

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(2) About the beginning of 1893, several young men of Kerehada ... came repeatedly to Mr. Lütze, mostly at night, to express their willingness to become Christians. They were Kalla, ... Karcha, the son, and Konga, the nephew of the *headman* of the village. They broke caste and openly spoke against idolatry and heathenism ... After some time Karcha

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and Konga asked [the missionary] to lend them some money to clear off their debts, which prevented their joining the Christians. Mr. Lütze had his suspicions, but Joseph. Kalla's cousin, said it would be wrong to hinder the victory of the gospel: he borrowed the money himself and lent it to the young men, getting a bond from them for the same. Then the three young men came to the mission-house at Kaity [i.e., Ke:ti] and openly joined the Christians ... The news spread like wild fire, and from the villages round to a distance of 15 miles people were flocking into Kaity sitting down inside and outside the mission-compound and trying to persuade the three young men to return to caste. For ten days the entreaties and tears of their female, and the promises and entreaties of their male, relations continued, and repeated endeavors were made to carry them off by force.

At last the young men could stand it no longer. On the 7th. April 1893 Karcha and Konga stole away, and four days afterwards Kalla followed them. By the intrigues of the headman they were after a month re-admitted into caste, and Kalla even succeeded in enticing back his son Madya (Immanuel). The poor boy is now a drunkard and totally ruined. 'It is better to be ruined body and soul than to be a Christian,' that is the opinion held and expressed by many of the heathen. But the heathen Badagas, especially the headman ... were not satisfied with these successes. He induced the backsliders to deny the receipt of the money lent to them by Joseph and to force him to return the bonds. Joseph was threatened by them with a cudgelling and with death if he did not return the bonds. Moved by fear he at last returned them. But his tormentors were not satisfied; they refused acceptance of the bonds. Twice Kalla lay in wait for good-natured Joseph ..., dragged him to a safe place and beat him mercilessly, and Karcha lodged a complaint against Joseph accusing him of fraudulently eliciting a bond from him without paying him the money. He brought false witnesses, who swore to the truth of the complaint.... But the case was decided in favour of Joseph. Cheerfully Joseph and Isaiah returned that day from Coonoor to Kerehada. On the way they found Titus of Chogatorre [So:gatore] and invited him to spend the night with them. So the three men wended their way home, followed at a short distance by Isaiah's daughter and his brother-in-law. Just after they had crossed a deep

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[stream]... Karcha, armed with a cudgel, rushed forward from behind a rock and knocked the three men down. Kalla, Konga and Mark [Mada] also came forth from their hiding place, while the headman of the village with his servants was seen standing at a little distance encouraging the assailants. But as Isaiah's daughter and his brother-in-law called for help, they had to retire. Joseph and Titus were so injured, that they were unable to work for a whole month. Isaiah's arm had to be bandaged. When the assault was inquired into by the police, the assailants turned round and brought a complaint against their victims, whom they represented to have been the aggressors, and sued for Rs. 2,000 damages. This time, however, they were convicted and punished. Daniel also, the brother of Kalla, who had so greatly rejoiced at his brother joining the Christians, had to suffer from Kalla's spite. He drove him, his sick wife and his children out of their own house and locked it. After they got it back, he reaped Daniel's barley crop and filled his verandah with the straw. A few days afterwards the house was partially burned down. In consequence of this, Daniel's wife's illness was so aggravated that she died after long suffering... (B.E.M.S., 1893, no. 54, 88–90; my italics).

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It is apparent from many such cases that the converts, their fellow villagers and even the missionaries were commonly undergoing stress during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Attempts to make the converts return were sometimes legalistic and sometimes not, sometimes violent and sometimes merely argumentative. Much of the behaviour that marked these feuds drew its form and inspiration from the old practice of ostracism. Even before the British came to the Nilgiris Badagas had been in the habit of banishing members of the community for certain categories of crime and anti-social behaviour. Such people would then have to clear a patch of land in the jungle and make a new home there or else find a distant village willing to house them. The attempts to exclude converts from their own villages fitted this pattern and obliged the mission to allocate land near its compound for some of the new converts. Male converts who later reverted to Hinduism were readmitted to the Badaga community by a ceremony which involved shaving the head, cutting the thread of the loincloth, and purifying the tongue by burning it with a golden wire or some charcoal ('Miles', 1951, 70).

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Lovers and Prostitutes

3.6. Badaga girls used to be married shortly after puberty and youths in their late adolescence. Various social pressures, most importantly the new educational requirements, have increased these ages until today a girl gets married at about 16 and a young man in his early 20s. Since births are not registered it is possible for parents to claim their daughter is older than she really is at marriage: recent legislation about age at marriage (18 for girls, 21 for men) might sometimes prompt them to do so.

One effect of this raising of the appropriate age for marriage has been an increase in premarital sex activity among male youths. The corresponding phenomenon does not seem to have occurred among the girls, however; quite the opposite, in fact. I was told that a "double standard" has recently appeared, in that if an unmarried man is known to be having an affair he is not thought badly of, whereas if a young woman does so she is mocked by other villagers and considered very immoral. This development has come about since mid-century because of changing attitudes towards pregnancy. In earlier days an unmarried girl would have affairs without any great fear of pregnancy, because she knew that if she did become pregnant she could go before the village council, name the father, and he would be forced to marry the girl concerned. She only had to assert that a man was the father and he would have to marry and support her — even if he already had a wife. Should a man refuse to accept the council's decision on the matter he could be outcasted and ordered out of the village, his property divided among his brothers, and a share of it given to support the pregnant girl. This, rather than an abortion, was the normal procedure. Today an unmarried woman is very circumspect even if she has reached the age of 30. She knows that a ruined reputation can spoil her chances of an advantageous marriage, and the village council has little power to force a wayward man into marrying or supporting her today.

3.7. As with much else in Indian social organization, there is a hierarchy in the frequency and acceptability of extra-marital sexual partners, as outlined below.

(*a*) Most frequently chosen is a girl related as affine to a boy; they are a couple who might later marry without offence. Usually this means the girl would have to be of the same phratry but a different clan, and live in a different village from the boy's. If the parents

and Irula women had *belle*, whereas today only a tiny minority of them do.

People with either of these diseases are generally weak and unhealthy. *Su:le* can be recognized by the watery sores, but *belle* cannot be seen because it is "inside the body" of men. A therapist can tell from a person's face whether he has either disease. The remedy is to eat opium, as often as three times daily. In earlier days Badaga youths were encouraged to have relations with a variety of women so that they would catch *su:le* early in life; for if it first attacked them when much older and weaker it could kill them. Since they deliberately tried to spread the disease in this manner, it tended to be more widespread among the Badagas than among other tribal groups.

Nowadays it is a great disgrace if a person is known to have a venereal disease and he is shunned socially. The seriousness with which it is treated is adumbrated in the proverb, "A debt is like a woman's disease (*su:le*)." In general the disease is still brought into the community by men who have had relations with non-Badaga women, such as urban prostitutes. If a man knows that he is infected he avoids infecting his wife.

It is said that a particularly virulent form of the disease can only be cured by intercourse with a donkey. If the donkey dies immediately afterwards, the man is presumed cured. In one village where I stayed a man borrowed the washerman's donkey, but was dismayed to find that it did not die.

STERILITY

6.62. Aside from venereal disease, the only other serious reproductive problem for Badaga is infertility, as we have seen (3.17). To understand this, it must be stated that they do not traditionally connect conception with the fertilization of an ovum, but see it as an effect of satisfaction in the minds of the couple. Badagas do believe men can be sterile, but so rarely that only one man would

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task, and does not put it on again till she has bathed herself at the end of the pollution period.

Today each cluster of villages (i.e. Panchayat Board) has one trained nurse and two or three midwives appointed by the State Government. The later are just experienced Badaga midwives with no formal training who happen to have been recommended for the position. 759 744

Exorcists and Shamans

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10.7. Badaga exorcists are always male, and are very few in number. As often as not Badagas' ghosts have to be exorcized by non-Badaga exorcists. These men may also have lesser therapeutic skills, such as making talismans to ward off fevers and evil influences from the children who wear them. The idiosyncratic nature of exorcism is sufficiently indicated by the examples in Chapter 8 and calls for no further elaboration here.

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The most feared *mantrava:dis* (shamans) in the Nilgiris were members of the Kurumba tribe, one of whom might be "called in on all occasions of blight and murrain to propitiate or scare the demon of disease"—if such there be (Breeks 1873: 53). Though this may still occasionally happen, I find no record of Kurumbas acting as exorcists to the Badagas, even though they did offer much supernatural protection to them from the sorcery of other malicious Kurumbas ; and they do sometimes try to cure the sick. Thus, "In 1891, the inmates of a single Kurumba but were said to have been murdered, and the hut burnt to ashes, because one of the family had been treating a sick Badaga child, and failed to cure it.... Again, in 1900, a whole family of Kurumbas were murdered, of which the head, who had a reputation as a medicine man, was believed to have brought disease and death into a Badaga village." (Thurston 1912: 233-34 ; also 1909 : 86). The Badagas were never so brutal with their own therapists, but the latter never seemed to be holding the threat of sorcery over the heads of their fellows. The worst that an unpopular therapist might have to suffer would be the mockery of an appropriate proverb; for instance, "He has healed others, but cannot cure himself" (Metz 1864 :95), or "It is half bad if you do something [wrong] when you know about it; entirely bad if you do it when you are ignorant."

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692 Ingam 1957). At each successive level in this process the headman will consider the decision of the previous lower-level hearings. Usually he will offer the same judgment, yet sometimes he may not only reverse the decision but also fine the headmen who have given a "wrong judgment". This right of the superior headmen is -- or, to be more accurate, was -- an important means of social control.

118 626 692 Until the end of the last century this system was functioning to the exclusion of the official Indian legal system, for no Badaga would risk the punishment of ostracism which could be expected for taking a case to a magistrate. A 19th Century Badaga proverb warned that, "If you take a complaint to a magistrate, it is as if you had put poison in your adversary's food". During the decades that this was in common use, there was a rigid set of punishments merited by specific crimes; and this was said to have replaced an earlier system of lex talionis in pre-British days. The Badagas would hang a man whom they had themselves found guilty of murder (unless the British officials heard about the case in time); for certain other severe crimes, including conversion to Christianity, ostracism or banishment was meted out. Apart from these punishments there were various demeaning and unproductive tasks that an offender might be ordered to perform; or his head might be shaved; or one of the standard fines could be levied. Among the Badagas of the 19th Century the only fines were in cattle, household items, foodstuffs, and coin to the value of Rs. 1/4, 1/2, 1, 3, 6, 12, 24, and 48. No intermediate or higher sums were demanded at that time; but in the present century the rates have increased and once a fine of Rs. 5000 (about $1060 U.S.) was levied by a Badaga council in a very serious case. There are detailed regulations for the fixing and payment of fines.

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648 The relationship between the communities of the plateau was not solely